REMARKS

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the foregoing, claims 1-3 and 6-12 have been cancelled. No new matter is being presented, and approval and entry are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-12 are pending and under consideration. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 1-11

In the Office Action at page 2, claims 1-11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,873,080 to Coden et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,230,204 to Fleming, III and newly cited U.S. Patent No. 5,850,433 to Rondeau. This rejection is traversed and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Independent claim 1 is directed to an information search system and, in relevant part, has been amended to recite "an information storage unit which stores personal information, including a number of family members, with respect to each of a plurality of users and a plurality of pieces of search target information." Independent claims 2, 3, and 6-11 have been similarly amended. Applicants respectfully submit that Coden et al., Fleming, III, and Rondeau each fail to teach or suggest this feature.

At page 3, the Office Action acknowledges that Coden et al. fails to teach or suggest "the storage of personal information with respect to each of a plurality of users and information indicating that the pieces of search target information are searched by the user, nor an outputting unit which outputs ... the personal information on each user by whom the piece of search target information is searched as claimed" and relies upon Fleming, III to teach these features. Applicants, however, respectfully disagree.

Fleming, III is directed to a method and system for estimating usage of computer resources "performed in such a way that desired demographic information is available and computer users are not deterred from using the resource by the usage estimation techniques" (Abstract), and not "a search and retrieval system similar to that of Coden", as asserted at page 3 of the Office Action. More specifically, Fleming, III teaches a system that "selects a computer system resource of interest", "receives demographic information on various computer users with access to the resource", "uses the demographic information to select some of the computer users to be a representative sample of all computer users with access to the resource", and

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"estimates the total usage of the computer system resource of interest by all the users based on the usage of the representative sample users" Abstract. Thus, according to the teachings of Fleming, III, as not to deter use of the resource because of the estimation techniques, the only information output is an estimate based on a representative sample of users.

The present invention, in contrast, includes "an outputting unit which outputs, when a piece of search target information is specified, the personal information on each user by whom the piece of search target information is searched based on the pieces of information stored in the information storage unit." Applicants respectfully submit that Fleming, III teaches away from the display of the personal information of each user by whom the piece of search target information is searched, as Fleming, III seeks to estimate data based on a representative sample of users. Because of this estimation of data, Fleming, III is not concerned with the activity of each individual user. Rather, Fleming, III records usage information only for the representative sample of users chosen based on demographic information. Thus, Fleming, III fails to teach or suggest "an outputting unit which outputs, when a piece of search target information is specified, the personal information on each user by whom the piece of search target information is searched based on the pieces of information stored in the information storage unit," as recited by amended independent claim 1. Similar features are recited by independent claims 2, 3, and 6-11.

At page 4, the Office Action asserts that newly cited Rondeau teaches "a control unit which calculates search parameters based on the stored personal information" and "a searching unit which searches, when a user specifies a search condition, for a piece of search target information satisfying the search condition and the calculated search parameters from the pieces of search target information in the information storage unit, and stores information indicating that the pieces of search target information are searched by the user into the information storage unit" as recited in amended independent claim 1. Similar features are recited by independent claims 2, 3, and 6-11. The Office Action cites Rondeau at col. 4, lines 44-58, in support of this assertion. Applicants respectfully submit, however, that Rondeau fails to teach or suggest a control unit and a searching unit as recited in independent claims 1-3 and 6-11.

The cited portion of Rondeau states, in relevant part, "creating a customer profile for a customer and storing the profile in a customer profile database associated with the server, receiving a first directory search request from the customer, communicating one or more directory listings for display at the customer computer, updating the customer profile to include information relating to the first directory search request, receiving a second directory search

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request from the customer, supplementing the second directory search request with the updated customer profile and communicating one or more directory listings for display at the customer computer." While the Office Action at page 4 asserts that "Rondeau teaches supplementing a search with personal information stored in a user profile," Applicants respectfully disagree. Rather, Rondeau merely teaches supplementing a second search with information from a first search that has been stored in a user profile. Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that Rondeau fails to teach or suggest a control unit that calculates search parameters based on stored personal information and a searching unit which searches, when a user specifies a search condition, for a piece of search target information satisfying the search condition and the calculated search parameters from the pieces of search target information in the information storage unit, and stores information indicating that the pieces of search target information are searched by the user into the information storage unit, as recited in the amended independent claims.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that Fleming, III and Rondeau fail to cure the deficiencies of Coden et al. Thus, Coden et al., Fleming, III, and Rondeau, whether taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest all of the features of amended independent claims 1-3 and 6-11, and those claims depending directly or indirectly therefrom. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claims 1-3 and 6-11, and those claims depending directly or indirectly therefrom, patentably distinguish over the prior art and are in condition for allowance.

Claim 12

In the Office Action at page 7, claim 12 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Coden et al. in view of Fleming, III and newly cited Rondeau, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,946,678 to Aalbersberg. This rejection is traversed and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

As noted in the rejection of independent claim 12, amended independent claim 12 recites features similar to those of amended independent claim 1. Applicants respectfully submit that Aalbersberg is relied upon only to teach "a plurality of fitting values calculated for each result", and, thus, does not cure the deficiencies of Coden et al., Fleming, III, and Rondeau noted above with respect to amended independent claim 1. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claim 12 patentably distinguishes over the prior art for reasons similar to those set forth above with respect to amended independent claim 1. Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that Coden et al., Fleming, III, Rondeau, and Aalbersberg, whether taken

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alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest all of the features of amended independent claim 12 and, therefore, claim 12 is in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

In accordance with the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that all outstanding objections and rejections have been overcome and/or rendered moot. And further, that all pending claims patentably distinguish over the prior art. Thus, there being no further outstanding objections or rejections, the application is submitted as being in condition for allowance which action is earnestly solicited.

If the Examiner has any remaining issues to be addressed, it is believed that prosecution can be expedited by the Examiner contacting the undersigned attorney for a telephone interview to discuss resolution of such issues.

If there are any underpayments or overpayments of fees associated with the filing of this Amendment, please charge and/or credit the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

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